

# MICHIGAN SUPREME COURT



## *Office of Public Information*

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **JUDICIAL BRANCH SALARY INFORMATION AVAILABLE ON THE WEB**

LANSING, MI, July 11, 2007 – Salary information for Michigan Supreme Court Justices and Court of Appeals judges, as well as for employees of the Supreme Court, Court of Appeals, and State Court Administrative Office, is now on the Michigan Courts web site at <http://www.courts.michigan.gov/supremecourt/AboutCourt/Budget.htm>.

Chief Justice Clifford W. Taylor and Justices Michael F. Cavanagh, Maura D. Corrigan, and Robert P. Young, Jr., voted to release the information, with Justices Elizabeth A. Weaver, Marilyn Kelly, and Stephen J. Markman stating that while they agree with the release of the information to the public, it was not complete enough to respond to an information request from the Lansing State Journal. (See statements below.)

The Supreme Court's seven Justices are paid \$164,610 a year. The 28 judges of the Michigan Court of Appeals receive \$151,441.

In making the announcement, Chief Justice Clifford W. Taylor said, "Taxpayers are entitled to know what the cost of the judicial branch is. We believe that the information we're providing allows the public to compare these salaries to the private sector and other states."

Taylor added, "I am very proud of our employees. We have a dedicated, hard-working group of people who help keep the justice system running smoothly, and they should and do receive a fair wage."

WEAVER, J., states as follows: I agree with the majority's decision to release the salary information it has released; however, the majority has not provided sufficient information to the public in response to the Lansing State Journal's request for a list containing the names, job titles, departments, salaries and hire dates of Supreme Court justices, Court of Appeals judges, and judicial employees.

The public has a right to know where and how its tax dollars are spent and this Court should provide *more* information rather than *less*.

MARKMAN, J., states as follows: The Lansing State Journal has requested the "names, job titles, departments, salaries and hire dates" of Supreme Court justices, Court of Appeals judges, and all judicial employees. The majority, while providing the salary ranges for employee classifications, has chosen not to provide the names of any judicial employees, their dates of hire

or their individual salaries. I would provide the requested information for the following reasons: (1) the Civil Service Commission on behalf of the executive branch has already provided such information in response to a similar request and there is no basis for distinguishing between the judicial and executive branches concerning access to public employee information; (2) although the Freedom of Information Act is not directly applicable to the judicial branch, under this act, public records are generally available absent an exemption from disclosure and there is no exemption that even remotely pertains to the records sought in this case; (3) Administrative Order No. 1997-10, adopted by this Court in 1997, specifies that judicial employee records are not open to public access, but expressly excepts the “full name of the employee,” the “date of employment,” and the “current salary of the employee,” which are the subject of the present request; (4) Administrative Order No. 1997-10 has been in force for nearly a decade and has clearly communicated to all judicial employees since that time that the information authorized to be disclosed therein constitutes public information; and (5) there is no information that must be more transparent than the use of tax dollars; the public is entitled to the fullest possible access to information concerning the expenditure of tax dollars and there is no obligation upon those seeking such information to make any specific showing of need.

KELLY, J., joins the statement of MARKMAN, J.

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